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CEBUANO-ENGLISH DICTIONARY CARD FILE. FINAL REPORT.

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CEBUANO-BISAYAN (VISAYAN) IS SPOKEN IN THE CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES AND IS THE LANGUAGE WITH THE LARGEST NUMBER OF NATIVE SPEAKERS IN THE PHILIPPINES. THERE IS NO ADEQUATE DICTIONARY FOR THIS LANGUAGE, AND THIS PROJECT HAS PROVIDED A CARD FILE ON THE BASIS OF WHICH A DICTIONARY MAY BE PREPARED. AN ADEQUATE DICTIONARY OF CEBUANO NEEDS TO CONTAIN MORE THAN 30,000 ROOT ENTRIES. THIS FILE SUPPLIES APPROXIMATELY THAT MANY. BECAUSE THE SEMANTIC STRUCTURE OF CEBUANO FOLLOWS QUITE DIFFERENT LINES FROM EUROPEAN LANGUAGES, IT IS NECESSARY TO DEVELOP A DICTIONARY BASED SOLELY ON CEBUANO TEXTS. FURTHER, EXISTING DICTIONARIES COULD NOT BE USED AS A STARTING POINT AS THEY ARE INSUFFICIENT IN SCOPE AND TOO CLOSELY TIED TO ENGLISH OR SPANISH TO ALLOW FOR ACCURATE DEFINITIONS. THIS CARD FILE HAS BEEN PREPARED BY MAKING AN EXHAUSTIVE CONCORDANCE OF EXTENSIVE TEXTS AND THEN READING FURTHER TEXTS AND CHECKING AGAINST THE CONCORDANCE, LISTING ALL NEW ENTRIES OR NEW MEANINGS FOR OLD ENTRIES. FURTHER EXTENSIVE ORAL TEXTS WERE OBTAINED BY TAPE RECORDINGS AND CHECKED AGAINST THE CONCORDANCE. BLANKS HAVE BEEN FILLED IN BY CHECKING WITH SECONDARY SOURCES. THE RESULT OF THIS RESEARCH IS A CARD FILE OF AROUND 160,000 CITATIONS, ENOUGH MATERIAL FOR APPROXIMATELY 30,000 ENTRIES. (AUTHOR/AMM)

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FINAL REPORT

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Cebuano-English Dictionary Card File

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OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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I. Summary

Cebuano-Bisayan is spoken in the central and southern Philippines and is the language with the largest number of native speakers in the Philippines. There is no adequate dictionary for this language, and this project has provided card file on the basis of which a dictionary may be prepared. An adequate dictionary of Cebuano needs to contain more than 30,000 root entries. This file supplies approximately that many.

Because the semantic structure of Cebuano follows quite different lines from European languages, it is necessary to develop a dictionary based solely on Cebuano texts. Further, existing dictionaries could not be used as a starting point as they are insufficient in scope and too closely tied to English or Spanish to allow for accurate definitions. This card file has been prepared by making an exhaustive concordance of extensive texts and then reading further texts and checking against the concordance, listing all new entries or new meanings for old entries. Further extensive oral texts were obtained by tape recordings and checked against the concordance. Blanks have been filled in by checking with secondary sources.

The result of this research is a card file of around 160,000 citations, enough material for approximately 30,000 entries. This file has been carefully gathered and promises to be the basis for a dictionary which is not only a thorough piece of scholarship but a useful tool for specialists in the Philippines and for Americans resident in Cebuano-speaking areas. It is hoped that funds will be available to complete the project.

II. Introduction

Cebuano-Bisayan is a language spoken in the central and southern parts of the Philippines. It has the largest number of native speakers of all languages in the Philippines and is spoken in an area of strong American interest. In the Cebuano areas, it is the language of radio, elementary education, publication and of ordinary intercourse. There is an air force base in Cebu City at the center of Cebuano-speaking area and there are several hundred Americans, servicemen, Peace Corps volunteers and missionaries, resident in these areas. For this language there does not exist any adequate dictionary, and the purpose of this project is to provide a card file upon which a dictionary may be based. (The final goal is to provide a dictionary, but in the one year in which support was provided by this contract only the groundwork can be completed.)

An adequate dictionary should give clear meanings for the great majority of forms one runs across in ordinary conversation and reading of ordinary prose. It also should give a clear indication how each form is used -- i.e., which affixes occur with it, in what syntactic environments it occurs, and in what contexts it occurs. For Cebuano it was originally estimated that 15,000-20,000 roots with various meanings distinguished would pretty much cover texts of an ordinary content. However, as research progressed, it became clear that because of dialect variations and because of the importance put by the culture on elegant speech with varied vocabulary, the number of items in common usage considerably surpasses the original estimate. So far the files

contain some 30,000 items, but it is possible even now to find a dozen or more items in any current publication which are not represented in the files.

III. Methods

The compilation of this dictionary has its basis in the grammatical analysis contained in a reference grammar and in pedagogical materials (both of which were produced under contract with the Office of Education)*. The grammatical analysis describes the morphology and syntax of Cebuano and forms the basis upon which the affixational system and syntactic properties of every root can be unambiguously and succinctly specified.

From the very beginning it was obvious that Cebuano has a grammatical and semantic structure quite independent and arranged on quite different principles from that of European languages. It was also clear that existing word lists (except for one shining 18th century example no so-called "Cebuano dictionary" is more than a word list) used as their starting point English or Spanish concepts, so that the definitions are often widely off the mark. Furthermore, these works are lacking in entries and fail to give information on the grammar and usage. Another failure of many of these is that they list indiscriminately words from other languages spoken in the neighborhood of Cebuano -- Samar-Leyte Bisayan, Hiligaynon and even Tagalog, though the particular entry may not be used in any dialect of Cebuano.

Accordingly, it was necessary to start from scratch and disregard previous works. As a first step, a concordance was prepared for the texts given with the grammatical analysis and the texts of the pedagogical materials which had been prepared for the Office of Education. The occurrences were exhaustively noted and classified by meaning. This resulted in a card file consisting of around two thousand roots. To supplement this file the compiler of these cards began reading Cebuano publications, checking up items in the publications against the files. Whenever an item occurred in the reading which was not covered in the file, it was copied together with its context, a reference to the original text and translation. This citation was added to the files.

By this slow process in the course of three years the card file was expanded to about 25,000 citations for about five thousand roots. The only financial aid was a grant of $1,000 from Cornell University which paid for the typing of the card file and a small additional grant from the Southeast Asia Program to permit xeroxing of the sources.

From September 1966 through August 1967 the compiler was granted leave and given an NDEA-related Fulbright-Hayes Area Center Research Grant to go to the Philippines and continue compiling these cards. Supported by the OE contract for which this is the final report, the compiler hired and trained native speakers of Cebuano with a good knowledge of Cebuano and English to continue perusing Cebuano publications and adding to the file of citations.

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* J. Wolff, Beginning Cebuano, Yale University Press, Part I, 1966; Part II, 1967. J. Wolff, Cebuano Texts and Grammatical Analysis, mimeographed. 1962.

In order not to be too closely bound to the written language, a large number of tape recordings of natural unrehearsed speech by speakers from various parts of the Cebuano-speaking area were made. These tapes were transcribed and yielded texts amounting to an estimated two hundred thousand words, all of which were checked against the files and cited with reference, contexts and translations.

Furthermore, the compiler himself throughout his time in the Cebuano-speaking area constantly made notes of usages encountered or overheard in normal conversations and trained his assistants to do likewise. All of these examples were added to the files.

As a final procedure every available dictionary or word list was compared with the files and a list was made of the items in each of these secondary sources not exemplified in the card files. These lists gave the form but no indication of the meanings. These lists were in turn examined by native speakers from various parts of the Cebuano-speaking area, and any items with which the examiner was familiar, he used in a sentence.

All copying, translations, and sentence creation was checked by an independent native speaker, and since only highly capable people were hired to begin with, errors were minimized.

This process netted a file of some 160,000 citations for approximately 30,000 entries. A large number of the citations are duplications, but for the most part the various citations for an individual root indicate different meanings and usages, or on occasion morphological or other grammatical peculiarities.

Tests were also made of the adequacy of the cards for use as a basis of definitions. A system was devised for giving the relevant grammatical information, and the compiler, together with the help of a native speaker, worked out definitions for all words in the file beginning with ab (around one hundred and fifty entries). Any meaning or usage which came to mind but was not represented in the files was included in the definitions. In addition three people were given the list of entries (but not the cards) and asked to list all the meanings they could think of. In only two or three cases did one of these people think of a meaning which had not been covered in our trial definition, but there were numerous meanings covered by our trial definitions which people working out a definition without reference to the cards did not happen to think of.

IV. Results and Findings

A. Amount of Material Needed

Checks of Cebuano texts against the card file as it now stands (160,000 citations and 30,000 entries) indicate that there are still numerous items which have not been covered and that the process described in Sec. III above, of adding items gradually, should be continued. On the other hand, in any ordinary text of 50,000 words only a dozen or so new items will turn up. This indicates that it will be possible to add another three to five thousand entries without difficulty, but after that it will take unusual texts to turn

up new entries, and the amount of material can be considered sufficient for an adequate dictionary.

B. Character of the Vocabulary

It is clear that the meaning of any given vocabulary item must be in terms of other items with similar meanings and that the English translation must be given qualifiedly. For example, in the realm of shellfish, the shellfish called in English "cowry" are either saqang or bula:lu. (Some types of cowry are saqang and the rest are bula:lu.) However, saqang and bula:lu are not coterminous with "cowry." There are types of saqang which would not be called "cowry" in English and also types of bula:lu which are not cowries. The definitions of saqang and bula:lu, therefore, cannot be given in terms of English names but rather must be given in terms of their distinctive properties. The problem of presenting accurate and unequivocal meanings in a form that is readily grasped at a glance by the ordinary user is not unsoluble, though of greater difficulty for Cebuano than for European languages.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

What has been accomplished so far is merely the groundwork for a dictionary. The card file represents work of careful and accurate scholarship, and the dictionary, when completed, promises to be of great value not only to specialists in Philippine culture but to ordinary persons who need the dictionary as a tool for reading or learning the language. It is hoped that funds will be made available to complete this work.